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*Note on a Chinese inscribed slab lately dug out of St. John's Churchyard,  
Calcutta.—By THE REV. H. B. HYDE, M. A.*

[Read, December, 1893.]

The Chinese inscription, of which I exhibit a transcription, and also a paper-rubbing, occurs on a slab of agglomerate lava in St. John's Churchyard. Mr. T. H. Holland, A.R.C.S., F.G.S., of the Geological Survey, has lately read a paper to us upon this piece of stone,<sup>1</sup> geologically considered, and tells us that it belongs to a formation found in the neighbourhood of the Corea, and elsewhere on the Chinese coast. The slab measures 2 ft. 8½ in. by 2 ft. 5 inches, and is 6 in. thick. It was recently dug out of the ground on excavating the earth around the Speke monument.

I am informed by the Verger of St. John's that he had seen the slab before its present discovery. In the year 1886, in the process, he thinks, of preparing flower-beds at a spot on the north side of the Church, within the limits of the old burying-ground, four brick graves were

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Journal*, Vol. LXII, Part II, p. 164.

discovered at a depth of about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet. These graves, he said, lay side by side, and were covered by large square tiles of great thickness, and upon these tiles were lying a number of flat stones. The Chaplain ordered all to be covered up at once, but one of the flat stones being displaced was removed to the place where the inscribed slab recently was found. A flower bed being about that time made around the Speke monument, the stone was buried where it lay, to get rid of it. No one at the time took any particular notice of the stone, and certainly the existence of an inscription upon it was unsuspected. He says that the slab now unearthed was the one then buried.

The face of the stone still retains the remains of an original high polish, and upon this has been incised with a chisel an inscription of about 270 Chinese characters, arranged, as it were, in two pages or two series of columns. Of this inscription the following translation has been made by Mr. E. F. Taylor, Commissioner of Customs at Shanghai, and at present with the Chinese Commission at Darjeeling.

It shows that the slab must have been the Foundation stone of a fort erected by the Manchu Tartars on the Island of Chusan while they were subduing the Chinese of the Ningpo District.

“Record (of the building) of the coiled dragon and crouching tiger fortification :—

“In the 8th year of the 1st Emperor (Shunchih) of the Ching (present Manchu) dynasty (*i.e.*, about 1652 A. D.), the Imperial troops marched to the conquest of Wêng Chon, and in the first battle Juan Chin (probably the Chinese chief or general of the district) was captured. In the second engagement the city of Chon (on the island of Chusan) was reduced. At that time our ships were in such numbers that they spread to the horizon, and our banners obscured the sky. The Governor Ch'ên [leading the Manchu troops] with Ku-sai<sup>1</sup> Chin and Liu, Beileh<sup>2</sup> wu, Marshal T'ien and General Chang, having offered oblations of wine on the shore, ascended the two hills and gazed around them; when H. E. Ch'ên said—‘This is a remarkable spot specially designed by heaven; ‘how unlucky for our foe that he did not observe its advantages. Had ‘he posted troops in ambush on these two hills, and defended them on ‘every side with big guns, our soldiers, though brave, could never have ‘passed over. But we must profit by the experience of his disaster. ‘The whole conditions of the locality mark it out as a place to be ‘defended with fortifications and guns in position.’ H. E. Ch'ên then turning to Chang said: ‘You must draw up the necessary plans.’

<sup>1</sup> Manchu title. (?) ‘Guardians of the passes.’

<sup>2</sup> Manchu title.

Then turning back and speaking to Ch'iên (that is the writer of the inscription), he said, 'You will take charge of this work.'

"In two months the fortification was completed. The hill to the east is wavy in outline (the coiled dragon), and with eminences and depressions, while that to the west is gently sloping (the crouching tiger). On these two hills, then, was built the Tai fortification, which may be likened to a coiled dragon and crouching tiger. When the dragon is coiled and the tiger crouched, all is quiet, the whole universe is at peace. But their power to move and act is latent, though concealed. Restrained potentiality and hidden might, such is the outward appearance of the fortification: to intimidate the enemy from afar is its function. Soldiers may not be called into action for 100 years, but no day must pass without their being in readiness. Only have your troops ready and you may never have occasion to employ them. This is the idea (conveyed by the imagery) of the coiled dragon and the crouching tiger. Written by the Pacificator (Manchu title) of Chusan and Ningpo, Senior Brigadier (Manchu title) of the Banner troops (*i. e.*, Manchus from Peking) Jui Ch'ien."

Mr. Taylor, writing from Darjeeling, remarks: "I have no means here of giving the proper translations of the Manchu titles." He says, "The Chinese is good and classical, and evidently composed by a scholar."

In the *Journal* of the Royal Geographical Society for 1853, is a plan, and a detailed description by Sir J. F. Davis, Bart., of the Island of Chusan, but it contains no mention of the fort to which the Inscription relates. It is only to be conjectured that the fort, evidently an earth-work, was demolished by the British troops during our occupation of the island from 1840 to 1846; while we held the island as a guarantee for the fulfilment of the stipulations of the Treaty and that the battalion of native troops from Bengal, which formed part of our expedition, which attacked the island in 1840, brought back with them, on their return, this foundation stone. But if they did so, how it came to be buried in the Cathedral Churchyard, instead of being exhibited in some public place, or lodged in the Asiatic Society's Museum, is a question not yet solved.

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